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19 November 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: 19 November Meeting of the "Indochina Steering Group"

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1. I arrived at the meeting a few minutes late. [REDACTED] was discussing the status of [REDACTED] forces are to be withdrawn from Laos and eventually replaced by a total of eight [REDACTED]. It is not likely that any [REDACTED] will be ready before April. This means they will not be available for use during this dry season.

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2. There was a lengthy and complicated discussion of two contingency studies which have been underway; one was ordered by the President and deals with [REDACTED] contingency study. An inter-agency working group [REDACTED] is the CIA man) dealing with this has met only once. No paper is in preparation yet. The essential question to be dealt with concerns [REDACTED]

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A second contingency study, instigated by Kissinger, is much more elaborate and deals with Indochina as a whole. It is to include a detailed political scenario of future US actions to be taken. The scenario is nowhere near ready. Some of the related contingency plans are in early stages of preparation; an intelligence annex has been done under [REDACTED] auspices. Kissinger apparently expects that the Indochina study will be completed by about 1 December. Both of these contingency studies confusingly embrace varying aspects of work also being done in connection with NSSM 99 (see below).

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3. [REDACTED] reported that the operation against Ban Ban has been slipped one week. Meanwhile, [REDACTED] indicates some enemy awareness of the plan. At this point, I said that I thought when Ban Ban was being discussed by this group last week that there was a clear

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consensus that it was not advisable. Yet, the operation is approved. I thought we should earn our pay by taking positions on matters of this kind and making the consensus available to those making the decision. In response,

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pointed out that the Director and others were well aware of the negative aspects of the operation but chose to move ahead with it. The original field proposal has been rather drastically scaled down. It is to involve a raid in force and a quick withdrawal after destruction of supplies--it is not to be a seize-and-hold operation. The field plan for refugees has also been isolated from the Ban Ban plan and is being weighed separately.

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4. reported on the recent Washington Order of Battle conference. He noted that intelligence is seriously declining in South Vietnam. This is due to less contact between forces and fewer numbers of prisoners and documents. Enemy units are small.

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As ARVN forces take on increasing responsibilities, the problem will intensify because ARVN forces are not "intelligence-minded."

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seconded all of this and pointed out that the situation concerning our knowledge of enemy OB and manpower in Cambodia is even worse. It was agreed that would do up a memo on this and it will be used in an effort to crank up DOD and the field to take steps to improve the situation. pointed out in particular that we would be hard put, in the light of current information, to be very confident about our ability to monitor and verify any cease-fire.

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5. I reported that we intended to produce a memo on the dangers ahead in Cambodia during the first week in December. I mentioned also forthcoming trip to Laos and gave the group the background on the Director's request that we plan this type of trip. I also asked for a status report from other members of the group on what gives with NSSM 99. The short answer to this is that there is a great deal of material and a vast range of disagreements among those working on the problem. An intelligence annex of some sort has been done by OER

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and was made available within the Agency for comment about a week ago. It was said that OCI has seen this. Other papers are expected in rather considerable

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volume some time Monday or Tuesday of next week. It seems very clear that we will all have a very short deadline for the preparation of comments. A Senior Review Group meeting is scheduled for 25 November and the status of responses to NSSM 99 is to be taken up by the principals at that time. I suggested (and it was agreed) that SAVA undertake to insure that all appropriate parts of the Agency have in fact seen and commented on all of the papers that relate to this exercise.

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6. [REDACTED] raised the question of next year's Presidential elections in South Vietnam. He thought we should discuss what action the US should take in this regard. Thieu may not be the best man and there should be plenty of lead time available to insure that the matter is thought through. [REDACTED] agreed and said we would take this up at our next meeting.

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7. [REDACTED] reported on his conversation with General Clay about methodologies concerning bombing results. The meeting went well.

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8. [REDACTED] reported that the Sihanoukville post mortem has been well received in PFIAB circles. [REDACTED] reported no indications as yet of any fall-off [REDACTED]

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9. Two matters of interest to OCI emerged at the end of the meeting. The group renewed an expression of interest in an eventual memo on developments in North Vietnam since Ho's death. I said we were still planning to come to grips with this. I would like to be able to tell the group at the next meeting approximately when we can complete such a memo. Second, [REDACTED] raised his concern over the increasing numbers of [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] This seemed to indicate some kind of build-up and he asked what is the level of Chinese strength in Laos at which we begin to sound the alarm. I mentioned our difficulty in reporting on some aspects of this since we are not at the moment privy to the details of US bombing operations. These operations have obviously caused the Chinese concern and they are taking steps to protect themselves with additional forces. The fact of US bombing operations in this area came as a surprise to virtually all of the group. [REDACTED] offered to try to obtain details on the US operations.

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Deputy Director of Current Intelligence

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